Knowledge Management Practices and Service Quality in Nigerian Public Sector Organisations: The Mediating Role of Organisational Trust

Olabisi Ijeoma Dominic[1], Hauwa Lamino Abubakar[2], Ekanem Ediuku[3]

[1]*Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja*
[2]*Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja*
[3]*Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja*

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

Introduction: Persistent service quality challenges in Nigeria's public sector have been linked to poor knowledge-sharing cultures, knowledge hoarding, and low organisational trust, which constrain effective service delivery. Despite significant investments in public administration reforms, the sector continues to grapple with inefficiencies linked to poor responsiveness, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and inadequate alignment of services with citizens' needs. Service delivery in Nigeria often fails to meet public expectations, as indicated by recurrent complaints about slow response times, lack of transparency, and uneven access to essential services.

Objectives: This study examined the effects of knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, and knowledge utilisation on service quality and the mediating role of organisational trust.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and quantitative data were collected from 1,474 staff in public agencies under the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy (FMCIDE). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

Results: Results showed that knowledge hoarding had a modest but significant positive effect on service quality ($\beta = 0.101$, $p < 0.005$), knowledge transfer ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.001$) and knowledge utilisation ($\beta = 0.219$, $p < 0.001$) had stronger positive effects. Organisational trust significantly mediated these relationships, enhancing service quality. The findings revealed that knowledge transfer and knowledge utilisation had strong positive effects on service quality, confirming that sharing and applying knowledge are vital for improving public services. Knowledge hoarding showed a modest positive direct effect, which suggests that in certain contexts, retained knowledge may still contribute indirectly to service outcomes. Organisational trust was found to mediate the relationships between all KM practices and service quality, underscoring its role in enabling effective knowledge flows and collective action within public institutions. the study confirms that KM practices, when supported by organisational trust, significantly improve the quality of services delivered by public sector agencies in Nigeria.

Conclusions: These findings highlight the need for public institutions to move beyond traditional hierarchical models of knowledge control towards more participatory and trust-based knowledge management systems. Such systems are better suited to address the complex demands of modern governance and rising citizen expectations for efficient and equitable services.

Keywords: Knowledge management, organisational trust, service quality, knowledge hoarding, Nigerian public sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian public sector has long faced persistent challenges related to service quality, which have undermined citizen trust, institutional effectiveness, and national development aspirations. Despite significant investments in

Research Article

public administration reforms, the sector continues to grapple with inefficiencies linked to poor responsiveness, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and inadequate alignment of services with citizens' needs (Avila, Muñoz, & Pinto, 2021). Service delivery in Nigeria often fails to meet public expectations, as indicated by recurrent complaints about slow response times, lack of transparency, and uneven access to essential services (Nwosu & Ananti, 2024). The rise in citizen awareness and expectations, coupled with fiscal constraints, has further heightened the urgency for innovative approaches to improve service quality. Scholars have argued that these challenges are symptomatic of deeper structural and managerial deficiencies, including fragmented communication channels and rigid hierarchical structures that impede adaptive service delivery (Madan & Ashok, 2023). Therefore, addressing these entrenched problems requires the adoption of holistic strategies that prioritise not only operational efficiency but also responsiveness and accountability in public sector institutions.

Against this backdrop, knowledge management (KM) has emerged as a strategic enabler of improved service delivery in the public sector. KM encompasses a range of practices designed to facilitate the systematic creation, sharing, utilisation, and retention of knowledge within organisations (Munyoro, Machimbidza, & Mutula, 2022). In contexts like Nigeria, where public sector agencies must operate in complex and dynamic environments, KM provides a pathway for enhancing organisational learning, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making (Zamir & Kim, 2022). The effective management of knowledge resources allows institutions to improve service quality by minimising redundancies, promoting transparency, and ensuring that decisions and actions are informed by institutional memory and best practices (Akpa, Eze, & Igwe, 2020). Empirical studies have shown that knowledge hoarding, transfer, and utilisation significantly influence organisational outcomes, with knowledge transfer and utilisation being particularly important for fostering collaboration and driving service improvements (Buonomo, Fiorilli, Romano, & Benevene, 2022; Umer, Iqbal, & Javed, 2023). By integrating KM practices into the core processes of public institutions, it becomes possible to build adaptive capacity, enhance service delivery frameworks, and meet the evolving needs of citizens in a sustainable manner.

Despite the growing interest in KM, significant gaps persist in the literature regarding its application in the public sector, particularly in relation to service quality and the mediating role of organisational trust. Much of the existing research has focused on private sector contexts or on organisational performance metrics such as productivity and financial outcomes, leaving service quality in the public sector relatively underexplored (Pepple, Makama, & Okeke, 2022). Moreover, while the benefits of knowledge sharing and utilisation are well documented, the literature has paid limited attention to the conditions under which these practices translate into improved service outcomes in bureaucratic settings (Kassa & Ning, 2023). Organisational trust is increasingly recognised as a critical factor that shapes the success of KM initiatives, yet its role as a mediating variable remains insufficiently examined (Flynn, Morrell, & Park, 2022; Oliveira, Curado, & Balle, 2021). Trust fosters openness, reduces resistance to knowledge sharing, and enhances collective problem-solving, all of which are essential for delivering high-quality public services. Addressing this gap is vital for developing more nuanced models that capture the complex interplay between KM practices, trust, and service quality in public administration.

OBJECTIVES

This study is therefore motivated by the need to fill these gaps by investigating how knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, and knowledge utilisation affect service quality in Nigerian public sector organisations, with organisational trust as a mediating factor. The central problem addressed in this research is the persistent failure of public sector agencies to deliver services that meet citizen expectations, a failure that can be traced in part to poor KM practices and low levels of institutional trust (Kumar, 2024). The specific objectives of the study are to analyse the effect of knowledge hoarding on service quality, assess the effect of knowledge transfer on service quality, and evaluate the effect of knowledge utilisation on service quality in Nigerian public sector organisations. The study focuses on agencies under the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, given their critical role in delivering digital and communication services to a broad cross-section of the population.

METHODS

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Research Article

Knowledge management (KM) comprises various practices through which organisations systematically create, store, share, and apply knowledge to achieve strategic goals. Among the core elements of KM are knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, and knowledge utilisation. Knowledge management is growing in the business realm as a strategic asset that enhances an organization's potential for attaining competitive advantage. It is a crucial instrument that steers the economy towards a favourable condition and enhances the interaction between manufacturing enterprises and the global context (Akpa et al., 2020).

To maintain development, innovation, and a competitive advantage, organisations must effectively manage knowledge. Consequently, knowledge management has been crucial in leveraging the current knowledge capital (knowledge, skills, or competence) utilised inside an organisation. In summary, knowledge can be encapsulated by a knowledge management system (KMS), an information system designed to enhance the efficacy of an organization's knowledge management for future utilisation (Bryce et al., 2022).

Knowledge hoarding refers to the deliberate retention of information or expertise by employees who, driven by self-interest, insecurity, or power dynamics, withhold knowledge from colleagues (Flynn et al., 2022; Kassa & Ning, 2023). This behaviour results in fragmented knowledge flows, weakened collaboration, and diminished problem-solving capacity within organisations (Nouri, Ali, & Hashmi, 2022). Knowledge hoarding also refers to the deliberate efforts by staff members to conceal or obscure knowledge or information demanded by others. The accumulation of knowledge stifles creativity and innovation, which might otherwise be compatible with service delivery.

An increasing number of employees in today's workplace are hiding, hoarding, or simply refusing to share their information with others in their organisation. This is becoming an increasingly problematic issue. According to Flynn et al. (2022), it is disruptive and has a substantial impact on the lack of productivity that exists in the workplace where it is present. It would appear that employees who intentionally hoard knowledge will be confronted by similar selfish behaviour displayed by some of their peers, which will ultimately turn detrimental to them and limit their capacity for innovative thinking (Wu, Liden, Liao, & Wayne, 2021).

In the Nigerian public sector, knowledge hoarding has been identified as a cultural norm that undermines service effectiveness by limiting the dissemination of critical insights across functional units (Oliveira et al., 2021). In contrast, knowledge transfer represents a positive and constructive process whereby knowledge is exchanged across individuals, teams, or units to support learning, innovation, and improved organisational outcomes (Buonomo et al., 2022). It encompasses formal mechanisms such as mentoring, training, and documentation, as well as informal interactions that facilitate the replication of best practices (Isah & Ibrahim, 2023).

Knowledge utilisation refers to the application of acquired or shared knowledge to solve organisational problems, inform decisions, and improve operations (Umer et al., 2023). Effective knowledge utilisation allows organisations to convert intellectual assets into tangible service improvements and strategic advantage (Mohaghegh, Keshavarz, M, & Zarei, 2024). Businesses require knowledge to address daily challenges and issues in production, service delivery, and operations divisions. The acquired knowledge is utilised to anticipate issues in market demands and consumer preferences, enabling the development of products and service lines that effectively meet market needs and enhance productivity (Mullei & Nyaribo, 2020).

Knowledge utilisation is alternatively referred to as knowledge application or knowledge implementation (Umer et al., 2023). Knowledge utilisation refers to the practical application of knowledge in achieving various corporate objectives. It is the utilisation of knowledge in executing activities inside an organisation that integrates into internal procedures for problem-solving. It is a crucial component of knowledge management procedures, particularly in relation to knowledge generation and sharing, due to its practical significance (Rehman et al., 2021). The word also refers to an organization's approach to efficiently manage, access, and utilise knowledge for strategic objectives (Yasmin et al., 2024). It is described as the use and utilisation of codified and disseminated information to develop and execute organisational procedures that improve organisational performance (Harif et al., 2022). Consequently, effective knowledge utilisation encompasses more than mere storage and engagement; it relies on the conversion of knowledge into use in actual work contexts (Mohaghegh et al., 2024).

Zayed et al. (2022) argued that knowledge utilisation is the final knowledge management activity that matches objectives with operational capabilities, so completing the lifespan of strategic execution. The researchers asserted

Research Article

that acquired knowledge, when kept and transmitted without proper application in relevant domains, is tantamount to the absence of knowledge altogether. They argued that the fundamental purpose of employing knowledge management to address organisational difficulties is for effective use.

Service quality in public administration relates to the capacity of public organisations to meet the expectations of citizens and stakeholders in an efficient, transparent, and equitable manner. Unlike in the private sector, where service quality is closely tied to profitability, public service quality focuses on accessibility, fairness, responsiveness, and the ability to meet public needs (Nwosu & Ananti, 2024). The SERVQUAL model, though originally designed for private sector services, provides a useful lens for assessing public service delivery through five key dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Omete, 2022). Reliability refers to the ability of an organisation to deliver promised services dependably and accurately, while responsiveness denotes the willingness to help citizens and provide prompt service. Assurance relates to the competence and courtesy of staff, empathy reflects the degree of care and individualised attention given to service users, and tangibles cover the physical facilities and resources supporting service delivery. In the Nigerian public sector, deficiencies across these dimensions are common, with citizens frequently expressing dissatisfaction regarding slow service, poor communication, and inconsistent quality standards (Avila et al., 2021).

Organisational trust plays a vital mediating role in the relationship between KM practices and service quality. Trust can be understood as the expectation that individuals and groups within an organisation will act in ways that are fair, reliable, and aligned with collective goals (Flynn et al., 2022). In the context of knowledge management, trust reduces the perceived risks associated with sharing knowledge, thereby encouraging openness, cooperation, and collective problem-solving (Oliveira et al., 2021). Low levels of trust, as observed in many Nigerian public sector institutions, foster knowledge hoarding and obstruct the free flow of information necessary for service improvements (Kassa & Ning, 2023). Organisational trust not only facilitates knowledge transfer and utilisation but also enhances the willingness of staff to engage with reforms and innovations aimed at improving service quality (Chidiadi, 2023). As such, trust acts as a critical enabler that transforms KM initiatives from abstract strategies into practical drivers of public service excellence.

Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical research highlights the significance of KM practices in shaping organisational outcomes, including service quality. For instance, Zamir and Kim (2022) demonstrated that organisations that embed KM practices into their core operations are more agile and better equipped to meet citizen demands. Similarly, Buonomo et al. (2022) found that knowledge transfer enhances institutional resilience and responsiveness, key components of service quality in public administration. Cheng et al. (2024) examined the mechanisms and constraints surrounding organisational inclusion's influence on employee knowledge hoarding, utilising a survey conducted with 366 knowledge front-line employees and junior managers from large and medium-sized Chinese organisations. The results demonstrated that psychological security and perceived cohesion served as mediators in the relationship between organisational inclusion and employee knowledge hoarding. Furthermore, organisational inclusion has the potential to reduce employee knowledge hoarding by enhancing their psychological security and perceived cohesion.

Radevic et al. (2023) examined the significance of knowledge transfer, hierarchical organisational structure, and trust as critical organisational elements that impacted knowledge management practices and the quality of healthcare services. The researchers identified a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between knowledge transfer and the quality of healthcare services, alongside a significant and adverse correlation between hierarchical organisational structure and the quality of healthcare services. Trust served as a mediating factor in the interplay between the transfer of knowledge and the quality of healthcare services, as well as between the hierarchical organisational structure and the quality of healthcare services.

Umer et al. (2023) established that knowledge utilisation improves operational efficiency and policy effectiveness, both of which are essential for high-quality public service delivery. These studies collectively affirm that when knowledge is effectively shared and applied, public sector organisations are better positioned to provide timely, reliable, and citizen-focused services. In Kuwait Mohaghegh et al. (2024) investigated the direct impact of knowledge management on organisational performance, as well as its indirect influence mediated by sustainability and the

Research Article

utilisation of knowledge. Their findings suggested that the application of knowledge and sustainability served as complete mediators in the connection between knowledge management and organisational performance. The utilisation of knowledge and sustainability both have direct and beneficial impacts on organisational performance, while also being directly shaped by knowledge management. They recommended that firms improve their performance through the strategic management of knowledge capabilities, the effective utilisation of knowledge, and by investing in sustainability and organisational resources. In Nigeria, Akpa et al. (2020) reported that KM practices, including knowledge audits and performance monitoring, contribute to transparency and accountability in government institutions.

However, several studies also document the detrimental effects of knowledge hoarding. Flynn et al. (2022) observed that hoarding behaviours reduce collaboration and hinder service delivery by delaying access to critical information. In the Nigerian context, Kassa and Ning (2023) noted that knowledge hoarding is often tolerated or overlooked, resulting in the entrenchment of inefficiency and poor service quality. This behaviour undermines collective problem-solving, stifles innovation, and perpetuates a culture of secrecy within public institutions (Oliveira et al., 2021). Conversely, Al-Abbadi et al. (2020) examined the moderating influence of knowledge hoarding on the relationship between knowledge management and innovation performance. Their findings revealed that the processes of knowledge management—encompassing acquisition, dissemination, storage, sharing, and application—have substantial impacts on innovation performance. Furthermore, the retention of knowledge has had a markedly detrimental impact on the performance of innovation. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that the act of knowledge hoarding did not influence the relationship between knowledge management processes and innovation performance. This observation may be elucidated by the understanding that, although knowledge hoarding adversely influences innovation performance, this detriment does not extend to the correlation between knowledge management processes and innovation performance. This phenomenon could be attributed to the characteristics of the knowledge retained by employees, particularly regarding its relevance and scarcity. While these studies highlight the negative implications of hoarding, they tend to focus on its effects on organisational performance rather than on specific service quality outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding how hoarding directly impacts citizens' service experiences.

The literature on knowledge transfer and utilisation also reveals important insights. Marbun et al. (2020) emphasised that transparency in communication and knowledge sharing positively influences employee performance and organisational adaptability. Isah and Ibrahim (2023) identified that diverse modes of knowledge transfer, including sociocultural interactions and formal documentation, are necessary for strengthening institutional memory and supporting continuous service improvement. Yet, in the Nigerian public sector, such transfer mechanisms are often underdeveloped, with limited integration into daily practices (Pepple et al., 2022). Similarly, while Umer et al. (2023) underscored the importance of knowledge utilisation for achieving service excellence, empirical studies rarely examine how utilisation links directly to the specific dimensions of public service quality, such as responsiveness or empathy.

Furthermore, although the enabling role of organisational trust in KM is recognised, few studies have systematically tested its mediating effect on the relationship between KM practices and service quality (Flynn et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021). The majority of existing research either treats trust as a background variable or examines it in isolation from KM processes. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on how trust shapes the translation of knowledge sharing and application into tangible service outcomes in public administration, particularly within Nigeria's complex bureaucratic environment (Kumar, 2024). Addressing this gap is essential for developing more comprehensive models that reflect the realities of public sector operations and identify actionable strategies for improving service delivery.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory, both of which provide a strong foundation for analysing the link between KM practices, trust, and service quality. RBV posits that organisations gain a sustainable advantage by effectively managing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources, among which knowledge is paramount (Barney, 1991). In public administration, knowledge constitutes a strategic asset that enables institutions to improve internal capabilities, adapt to environmental changes, and deliver superior services

Research Article

(Akpa et al., 2020). RBV thus underscores the need for public sector organisations to leverage KM practices as a means of building dynamic capabilities that support high-quality service delivery (Prakash et al., 2021).

Social Capital Theory complements RBV by highlighting the role of relationships, networks, and trust in facilitating knowledge exchange and collective action (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). It suggests that organisational trust and social cohesion are essential for enabling knowledge sharing and collaborative problem-solving. In the context of public sector service delivery, social capital provides the relational glue that links KM initiatives to improved service outcomes by fostering cooperation and reducing barriers to knowledge flows (Flynn et al., 2022). Together, these theories offer an integrated lens through which to understand how KM practices, mediated by organisational trust, can drive improvements in the quality of public services.

RESULTS

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative research approach, consistent with previous investigations into the relationships among knowledge management (KM) practices, organisational trust, and service quality in public sector settings (Akpa et al., 2020). The cross-sectional design was appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to analyse the predictive relationships between KM variables, trust, and service quality outcomes (Madan & Ashok, 2023). Quantitative methods allowed for the statistical testing of hypothesised relationships using robust models that can account for direct and mediating effects (Flynn et al., 2022).

The study population consisted of senior and middle-level employees in public sector agencies under the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy (FMCIDE), including agencies such as the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), and Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST). These agencies were selected due to their strategic roles in delivering essential communication and digital services to the Nigerian public (Pepple et al., 2022). A proportionate stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation across agencies according to staff strength (Isah & Ibrahim, 2023). The final sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, targeting a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error (Akpa et al., 2020).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising standardised scales for measuring knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, knowledge utilisation, organisational trust, and service quality. These scales were adapted from validated instruments in prior studies (Buonomo et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021). Each construct was measured using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale to ensure reliability and validity (Nouri et al., 2022).

Questionnaires were distributed through official staff lists provided by the human resource departments of the participating agencies, with follow-ups conducted to enhance the response rate (Kassa & Ning, 2023). Analytical techniques included descriptive statistics for demographic profiling and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test both direct and mediating effects. The specified equation for the structural model is:

$$SQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 KH + \beta_2 KT + \beta_3 KU + \beta_4 OT + \varepsilon$$

where SQ = Service Quality, KH = Knowledge Hoarding, KT = Knowledge Transfer, KU = Knowledge Utilisation, OT = Organisational Trust, and ε = error term.

PLS-SEM Results

The reliability and convergent validity of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As shown in Table 1, all constructs met the minimum threshold of 0.70 for Cronbach's Alpha, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Akpa et al., 2020). The CR values ranged from 0.821 for knowledge hoarding to 0.886 for service quality, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.70 and confirming construct reliability (Flynn et al., 2022). The AVE values for all constructs were above 0.50, with service quality having the highest at 0.609, thus establishing convergent validity (Buonomo et al., 2022). These results demonstrate that the measurement model is reliable and valid for further analysis.

Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Research Article

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Knowledge Hoarding (KH)	0.714	0.821	0.534
Knowledge Transfer (KT)	0.784	0.858	0.566
Knowledge Utilisation (KU)	0.742	0.832	0.517
Service Quality (SQ)	0.834	0.886	0.609
Organisational Trust (OT)	0.823	0.867	0.571

Source: Smart-PLS Result Output, 2025

The model fit indices presented in Table 2 confirm that the structural model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.923, and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.908, both exceeding the 0.90 threshold for good model fit (Madan & Ashok, 2023). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.062, and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.057, both below the 0.08 maximum recommended value, indicating an acceptable level of approximation error (Kassa & Ning, 2023). The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.41, which falls within the acceptable range of less than 3. These indicators collectively suggest that the model provided a good representation of the observed data.

Table 2: Model Fit Assessment

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
CFI	0.923	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.908	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.062	≤ 0.08
SRMR	0.057	≤ 0.08
χ^2/df	2.41	< 3

Source: Smart-PLS Result Output, 2025

Table 3 displays the direct effects of the hypothesised structural paths in the model. Knowledge hoarding had a positive and significant direct effect on service quality (β = 0.101, t = 2.84, p = 0.005), while knowledge transfer (β = 0.198, t = 4.76, p < 0.001) and knowledge utilisation (β = 0.219, t = 5.01, p < 0.001) showed stronger positive relationships with service quality. Additionally, knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, and knowledge utilisation all had significant positive effects on organisational trust (KH → OT: β = 0.143, p = 0.001; KT → OT: β = 0.192, p < 0.001; KU → OT: β = 0.248, p < 0.001). Organisational trust also exerted a significant positive influence on service quality (β = 0.189, t = 4.02, p < 0.001). These findings indicate that KM practices not only directly affect service quality but also contribute to building trust, which is itself a driver of service outcomes (Oliveira et al., 2021).

Table 3: Direct Effects

Hypothesised Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
KH → SQ	0.101	2.84	0.005	Significant
KT → SQ	0.198	4.76	0.000	Significant
KU → SQ	0.219	5.01	0.000	Significant

KH → OT	0.143	3.25	0.001	Significant
KT → OT	0.192	4.11	0.000	Significant
KU → OT	0.248	5.04	0.000	Significant
OT → SQ	0.189	4.02	0.000	Significant

Source: Smart-PLS Result Output, 2025

The indirect effects of KM practices on service quality through organisational trust are summarised in Table 4. The analysis revealed that organisational trust partially mediated the relationship between knowledge hoarding and service quality (indirect β = 0.027, 95% CI [0.013, 0.049]), between knowledge transfer and service quality (indirect β = 0.036, 95% CI [0.021, 0.061]), and between knowledge utilisation and service quality (indirect β = 0.042, 95% CI [0.029, 0.068]). All confidence intervals excluded zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effects (Flynn et al., 2022). These results highlight the critical role of trust in translating KM efforts into tangible service quality improvements in the Nigerian public sector (Pepple et al., 2022).

Table 4: Indirect Effects (Mediation via OT)

Mediation Path	Indirect β	95% Confidence Interval	Decision
KH → OT → SQ	0.027	[0.013, 0.049]	Partial Mediation
KT → OT → SQ	0.036	[0.021, 0.061]	Partial Mediation
KU → OT → SQ	0.042	[0.029, 0.068]	Partial Mediation

Source: Smart-PLS Result Output, 2025

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study affirm the significant role that knowledge management (KM) practices play in shaping service quality outcomes in Nigeria's public sector. Knowledge hoarding, although often seen as a barrier to organisational performance, was found to have a modest positive direct effect on service quality. This somewhat counterintuitive result could reflect the contextual realities of the Nigerian public sector, where individuals who hoard knowledge may simultaneously guard institutional memory or critical information that indirectly benefits service delivery when accessed [Flynn et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021]. However, this finding contrasts with the dominant narrative in the literature that positions hoarding as detrimental to organisational outcomes (Kassa & Ning, 2023). It suggests that the dynamics of knowledge retention and disclosure within Nigerian bureaucratic settings require deeper exploration, particularly regarding how certain knowledge hoarding behaviours might coexist with informal sharing that supports service delivery under specific conditions.

Knowledge transfer and knowledge utilisation demonstrated strong positive effects on service quality, aligning with the assertions of Buonomo et al. (2022) and Umer et al. (2023) that effective knowledge sharing and application enhance organisational responsiveness, reliability, and innovation. In particular, knowledge transfer facilitates the spread of best practices and reduces redundancies, which are critical for addressing inefficiencies and improving citizen experiences in service interactions (Isah & Ibrahim, 2023). Similarly, knowledge utilisation ensures that institutional knowledge informs decision-making and operational processes, thus enabling public agencies to deliver timely and appropriate services (Mohaghegh et al., 2024). These results confirm that KM practices are essential for improving the SERVQUAL dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, and assurance in the Nigerian public sector, where service quality has historically been constrained by fragmented communication and weak institutional learning (Nwosu & Ananti, 2024).

The mediating role of organisational trust further reinforces the findings of prior research that positions trust as a critical enabler of KM success. The significant indirect effects observed in this study are consistent with the work of Flynn et al. (2022), who noted that trust reduces perceived risks associated with knowledge sharing and fosters openness. Similarly, Oliveira et al. (2021) demonstrated that trust encourages collaboration and collective problem-

Research Article

solving, both of which are vital for achieving high service quality. In the Nigerian context, where public sector operations are often characterised by suspicion and hierarchical rigidity, the establishment of trust appears to be a necessary condition for KM initiatives to translate into meaningful service improvements (Pepple et al., 2022). This study thus extends the literature by empirically confirming that organisational trust mediates the relationship between KM practices and service quality, highlighting its role in enabling knowledge to flow and be applied effectively in public service settings.

Therefore, these findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting KM as a driver of public sector reform and improved service delivery (Zamir & Kim, 2022). They also underscore the importance of context in shaping the outcomes of KM initiatives. While international studies have generally treated knowledge hoarding as uniformly harmful (Nouri et al., 2022), this study suggests that its effects may be more nuanced within specific institutional and cultural environments. Furthermore, the confirmation of organisational trust as a mediator calls for more deliberate efforts by public managers to foster trust-building mechanisms, including transparent communication, equitable knowledge-sharing incentives, and supportive leadership (Chidiadi, 2023). These interventions could help overcome entrenched barriers to service quality and advance the goals of citizen-centred public administration in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the effects of knowledge hoarding, knowledge transfer, and knowledge utilisation on service quality in Nigerian public sector organisations, with organisational trust examined as a mediating variable. The findings revealed that knowledge transfer and knowledge utilisation have strong positive effects on service quality, confirming that sharing and applying knowledge are vital for improving public services. Knowledge hoarding showed a modest positive direct effect, which suggests that in certain contexts, retained knowledge may still contribute indirectly to service outcomes. Organisational trust was found to mediate the relationships between all KM practices and service quality, underscoring its role in enabling effective knowledge flows and collective action within public institutions.

The results offer important managerial and policy implications for public sector organisations. First, public managers must recognise that knowledge sharing and utilisation are not optional strategies but essential tools for enhancing service reliability, responsiveness, and overall citizen satisfaction. Agencies should institutionalise practices that facilitate cross-functional knowledge exchange, including mentoring schemes, communities of practice, and digital knowledge repositories. Second, policy makers should prioritise building organisational trust through clear communication, fair recognition of knowledge contributions, and policies that discourage secrecy and siloed operations. By doing so, they can create environments that support collaboration and innovation in public service delivery.

In conclusion, the study confirms that KM practices, when supported by organisational trust, significantly improve the quality of services delivered by public sector agencies in Nigeria. These findings highlight the need for public institutions to move beyond traditional hierarchical models of knowledge control towards more participatory and trust-based knowledge management systems. Such systems are better suited to address the complex demands of modern governance and rising citizen expectations for efficient and equitable services.

Based on the findings, this study makes several recommendations. Public sector organisations should design and implement formal knowledge-sharing policies that reward openness and discourage knowledge hoarding. Investment in digital infrastructure for knowledge transfer, including integrated information systems and online knowledge platforms, is crucial. Furthermore, leadership development programmes should emphasise the cultivation of trust and the creation of supportive organisational cultures that promote knowledge utilisation. Finally, further research should explore the specific mechanisms through which knowledge hoarding may contribute to service outcomes in different public sector contexts, to provide more nuanced guidance for policy and practice.

REFERENCES

[1] Akpa, V. O., Eze, S. C., & Igwe, A. N. (2020). Knowledge audits and performance monitoring in government institutions: A Nigerian perspective. *Public Sector Management Review, 16*(4), 278-293.

[2] Al-Abbadi, L., Alshawabkeh, R., & Rumman, A. (2020). Knowledge management processes and innovation performance: The moderating effect of employees' knowledge hoarding. Management Science Letters, 10(7), 1463-1472. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.12.021

[3] Al Sayegh, A. S., Al Blooshi, S. A., & Al Dahmani, H. (2022). The role of digital platforms in enhancing knowledge management in public organisations: Evidence from the UAE. *Government Information Quarterly, 39*(2), 101624. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2021.101624

[4] Avila, M., Muñoz, A., & Pinto, P. (2021). Bureaucratic bottlenecks and innovation in public service delivery: A systematic review. *International Journal of Public Administration, 44*(10), 861-875. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2020.1741591.

[5] Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 17*(1), 99-121.

[6] Bryce, J. M., Thinakaran, R., & Zakaria, Z. A. (2022). Knowledge Management Applied to Learning English as a Second Language Through Asynchronous Online Instructional Videos. Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice, 21, 115-133.

[7] Buonomo, I., Fiorilli, C., Romano, L., & Benevene, P. (2022). The role of knowledge transfer in enhancing resilience: Evidence from educational organisations. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 26*(3), 719-738. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-05-2021-0362.

[8] Cheng, Q., Yan, Q., & Nie, T. (2024). Beyond diversity: the impact mechanism of organizational inclusion on employee knowledge hoarding. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11,1550. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04085-z

[9] Chidiadi, V. (2023). Knowledge management integration and public sector performance: The Nigerian experience. *African Journal of Public Administration, 9*(1), 102-119.

[10] Flynn, S. I., Morrell, K. M., & Park, H. J. (2022). Knowledge hoarding and its impact on public service teams. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 32*(4), 694-711. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muab042

[11] Harif, M. A., Nawaz, M., Hameed, W. U. (2022). The role of open innovation, hotel service quality and marketing strategy in hotel business performance, Heliyon. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10441.

[12] Isah, A., & Ibrahim, R. (2023). Modes of knowledge transfer in Nigerian public institutions: A multi-method analysis. *Journal of African Public Sector Studies, 8*(2), 45-63.

[13] Kassa, A. K., & Ning, Y. (2023). Knowledge hoarding and its cultural underpinnings in the public sector: The case of Nigeria. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 36*(7), 981-999. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-09-2022-0220

[14] Kumar, A. (2024). Knowledge transfer in the digital age: investigating the mechanisms and challenges. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1-16. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4809874

[15] Madan, R., & Ashok, M. (2023). AI adoption and diffusion in public administration: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Government Information Quarterly, 40*(1), 101774. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.101774

[16] Mantje, M. P., Rambe, P., & Ndofirepi, T. M. (2023). Effects of knowledge management on firm competitiveness: The mediation of operational efficiency. *South African Journal of Information Management, 25*(1), 1549. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v25i1.1549

[17] Marbun, D. S., Juliandi, A., & Effendi, S. (2020). The effect of social media culture and knowledge transfer on performance. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute Journal, 3*(3), 2513-2520. https://doi.org/10.33258/birci.v3i3.1234

[18] Mohaghegh, M., Keshavarz, M., & Zarei, B. (2024). Knowledge utilisation and policy effectiveness: A study of Iranian government agencies. *Public Policy and Administration, 39*(1), 57-76.

[19] Mullei, S., & Nyaribo, W. M. (2020). Effect of Knowledge Management Practices on Organisational Performance of Selected State Corporations in Kenya. International Journal of Knowledge, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 8(1), 5-18.

[20] Munyoro, J., Machimbidza, T., & Mutula, S. (2022). An overview of knowledge management research in Zimbabwe: From 2010 to 2022. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 7404.

[21] Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, *23*(2), 242–266.

[22] Nouri, M., Ali, M., & Hashmi, M. (2022). Why do employees hoard knowledge? A conceptual model. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice, 20*(4), 511-525. https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2021.1890841

[23] Nwosu, A. N., & Ananti, P. O. (2024). Public sector reform and knowledge management in Nigeria: A critical analysis. *Nigerian Journal of Public Sector Studies, 11*(1), 33-51.

[24] Obwaka, D. E., Kalua, F. B., & Zulu, M. (2020). Knowledge transfer and decision making in sub-Saharan African public organisations. *Journal of African Management Studies, 4*(2), 88-104.

[25] Oliveira, M., Curado, C., & Balle, A. R. (2021). Knowledge hoarding in the public sector: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 25*(6), 1417-1437. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-07-2020-0555

[26] Omete, J. N. (2022). *Effect of knowledge management on service delivery of firms listed at Nairobi securities exchange*. University of Nairobi.

[27] Özveren, E., & Gürpinar, E. (2023). More a commons than a fictitious commodity: Tacit knowledge, sharing, and cooperation in knowledge governance. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01159-2

[28] Parise, S., Cross, R., & Davenport, T. H. (2006). Strategies for preventing a knowledge-loss crisis. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 47*(4), 31-38.

[29] Pepple, D., Makama, C., & Okeke, J. P. (2022). Knowledge management practices: A public sector perspective. *Journal of Business Research, 153*, 509-516. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.08.041

[30] Radević, I., Dimovski, V., Lojpur, A., & Colnar, S. (2023). Quality of Healthcare Services in Focus: The Role of Knowledge Transfer, Hierarchical Organizational Structure and Trust. Knowledge Management Research & Practice, 21(3), 525-536. DOI: 10.1080/14778238.2021.1932623

[31] Salim, S. Z., & Rajput, N. (2021). Dimensions of organisational performance: A review. *International Journal of Management Studies, 28*(1), 1-16.

[32] Srinivasan, R., & Perwez, S. (2020). Knowledge management adoption in Indian public organisations: Challenges and strategies. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 33*(5), 513-529.

[33] Umer, S., Iqbal, Q., & Javed, A. (2023). The role of knowledge utilisation in enhancing organisational outcomes: Evidence from Pakistan. *Asian Journal of Management Science, 14*(2), 87-104.

[34] Wanasida, Y., Suharnomo, S., & Sunaryo, S. (2021). Organisational performance in the public sector: A systematic review. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, 13*(3), 32-45.

[35] Wu, J., Liden, R. C., Liao, C., & Wayne, S. J. (2021). Does manager servant leadership lead to follower serving behaviors? It depends on follower self interest. J. Appl. Psychol., 106,152. doi: 10.1037/apl0000500

[36] Yasmin, F., Haider, S. A., Sohail, M., Tehseen, S., Poulova, P., & Akbar, A. (2024). How does knowledge based human resource management practices enhance organizational performance? The mediating role of knowledge workers productivity. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development, 8*(14), 9383. https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd9383

[37] Zada, S. (2022). The dark side of knowledge hoarding: An empirical study. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 43*(2), 291-310.

[38] Zamir, S., & Kim, D. (2022). Knowledge management and public sector innovation: An integrative framework. *International Public Management Journal, 25*(3), 367-390. https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2021.1883387

[39] Zayed, N. M., Edeh, F. O., Islam, K. M. A., Nitsenko, V., Polova, O., & Khaietska, O. (2022). Utilization of Knowledge Management as Business Resilience Strategy for Microentrepreneurs in Post-COVID-19 Economy. Sustainability, 14, 15789. https://doi.org/10.3390/su142315789